

**CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
WATER DIVISION**

**DIVISION DOCUMENTATION STANDARDS**

Standard Practice U-2-W

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

July 2005

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### **A – PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

1. These guidelines apply to all Water Division documents (decisions, briefs and resolutions) and correspondence (letters, memoranda) and all reports, including testimony and staff reports.
2. Reasonable deviation is allowable when appropriate. If you have any questions about the specific issue you are grappling with in relation to the format, a citation or writing style, consult your supervisor.
3. The Division standard for correspondence is perfection. There should be no errors in outgoing work products and all incoming documents should be properly processed.
4. An analyst or engineer (analyst) is responsible for creating the work product. Normally this consists of analyzing information and writing a draft resolution or staff report. All resolutions and staff reports will be done using PowerDocs. Set security so the analyst’s supervising Senior or project manager and all upper level managers can access the document as, at least, Read Only.
5. If the Project Manager and the Analyst disagree on a significant issue, they should discuss it with a Supervisor. However, the project manager has the responsibility for the report.
6. Staff reports are not like testimony, where the witness can sponsor a position and defend it on cross-examination. Consequently they must discuss in detail all issues related to the case and justify the way the issue was decided.

7. Seniors are responsible for the correctness of the numbers in the report. The Analyst must provide the Senior with an electronic copy of all spreadsheets he or she used to prepare the work product.
8. Supervisors are responsible for assuring that the documents are clearly written and complete (discuss every issue). This means Supervisors must have read the application, if the work product is a draft decision. Supervisors will not normally check calculations, but in keeping with the above guideline, should review tables for any visible errors, typos or clearly wrong numbers.
9. Seniors and Supervisors should each check the justification for all positions (prior Commission Order, Public Utilities Code Section). Water Division work products should never establish any new regulatory policy. That should be done only in a formal proceeding.

## **B – INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE**

10. The Branch secretaries will open and date-stamp all official mail except personal/confidential and inter-office mail.
11. They will distribute mail to the Branch Chief, Supervisors, and Seniors. For others, they put it in their mail slots.
12. Mail from DHS and other state agencies should be circulated then filed in the appropriate (609) file (Company files). Any other mail coming from other water organizations will circulate to all (using the Pass-Around folders).
13. Mail dealing with tariff filings and advice letters goes to the Tariff Unit.
14. All other incoming mail goes to the Branch Chief, unless addressed to a specific person, and the Branch Chief makes the assignment.

## **C – OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE**

### **1. Memoranda**

1. All memoranda leaving the Division will use the State Seal Memo Form available in PowerDocs. Prepare the memo as described below:



## Memorandum

**Date:** Date of Memo

**To:** Recipient of Memo

**From:** **Public Utilities Commission—San Francisco -** Writer of Memo (Writer's Initials in ink)

**File No:** See Appendix A

**Subject:** *Subject of Memo*

Use memos to make requests, to make announcements, and sometimes as a cover letter to communicate reports. Memos that make requests or announcements are read quickly. For such memos, get to the point in the first paragraph--the first sentence, if possible.

Single space memos and use a serif typeface. Skip a line between paragraphs.

In memos that make requests or announcements, keep the sentence lengths and paragraph lengths relatively short. Sentences should average fewer than twenty words, and paragraphs should average fewer than seven lines. Also, keep the total memo length to under one page, if possible.

Sometimes you will use memos to communicate reports (two pages or more). For these types of memos, you can include illustrations, attach appendices, and break the memo's text into sections. If references arise in the memo, include as endnotes. In memos that act as reports, the style changes as well. The sentences and paragraphs are typically longer than in memos that simply provide announcements or make requests.

For all types of memos, space your memo on the page so that it does not crowd the top. Also, send copies to anyone whose name you mention in the memo or who would be directly affected by the memo. Finally, remember that final paragraphs of memos that make requests or announcements should tell readers what you want them to do or what you will do for them.

Send copies to anyone whose name you mention in the memo or who would be directly affected by the memo.

Attachments.

**Copy to:**

Name to Receive Copy  
Name to Receive Copy

## **2. Letters**

1. Outgoing correspondence will normally go by letter.
2. Letters use the CPUC 2003 letterhead in PowerDocs. Prepare the letter as follows:

## PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



Insert Date

File No. (see Appendix A)

Recipient's name, Recipient's title

Recipient's company

Recipient's company address

ALL CAPS CITY NAME AND STATE ABBREVIATION, Zip

Dear (Mr. or Ms.) Lastname: (You can strikethrough this and write the first name if you know the person well and it is not a formal letter.)

Identify the origin of the letter. "This letter is in response to..." or "Your correspondence of (date) has been forwarded to me for reply." "This is an invitation to a conference..." "As we discussed on the telephone today at 10 AM..." Always tie the letter to the situation you are going to write about

"In your letter you..." "On (date) your utility dug a trench..." Describe things in temporal order (oldest first) or, if you are responding to their letter, the things they have requested in the order they requested them. Describe the situation in detail. List all the issues.

Do not insert opinion, use analyses. Start from a source, Commission decision or resolution is best, and show how it applies.

Address each item you have identified. Discuss options, but do not put yourself in the position that someone can say "the staff told me to do it."

"If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at (phone) or (e-mail address.)"

Send copies to anyone whose name you mention in the letter or who would be directly affected by the letter.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Name, Position

Branch

Water Division

Enclosure.

cc: Names to receive copy

2. The Project Manager will sign all project related correspondence (data requests, etc.) The Branch Chief or the Division Director will sign most other letters. All letters that are sent out of the Division must be sent in electronic form to the Branch Secretary or Executive Secretary who will save the final version in PowerDocs.
3. Letter originated by the Project Manager or other management will be reviewed by the next higher manager before sending.

### **3. Outgoing Correspondence Review Checklist**

- ☐ Attach related letters, workpapers and documents to the outgoing correspondence.
- ☐ In the case of outgoing correspondence related to an advice letter, attach the correspondence to the outside cover of the advice letter folder and put the related workpapers and documents inside the folder in an organized manner.
- ☐ Outgoing correspondence must have a "File No.", based on Water Division's file and system number designation of each category (see below).
- ☐ Fill out the top and bottom portions of the outgoing correspondence form (pink form). Top portion includes: name of water or sewer company; date the letter is sent for approval; author's initial; and signer's initial. The bottom portion of the pink form includes mailing instructions.
- ☐ For first, second and third level approval, fill out the "Send To" column by checking the appropriate name.
- ☐ Attach the pink form on top of the outgoing correspondence.
- ☐ The author of the outgoing correspondence shall instruct the support staff, via the pink form, to send a copy of the correspondence to:
  - (a) Protestant in advice letter filing;
  - (b) Chrony File;
  - (c) Division File including the file No.;
  - (d) Formal File including the file No., Service List and ALJ
  - (e) Interested parties outside the Commission designated on the pink form as "cc's";
  - (f) Author of the outgoing correspondence and other interested staff in the Commission designated on the pink form as "bcc's."

- ❑ When ready for review and signature, send the correspondence including the attached documents/advice letter folder and the pink form to the assigned Project Manager for the “First Level Approval.” or signature. The Project Manager will annotate the correspondence using the proofreader’s marks in our dictionary. If there are just a few corrections, the Project Manager will forward the document to the Supervisor for additional review, otherwise the drafter will make corrections based on the proofreader marks before going forward.
- ❑ The individuals responsible for First Level Approval are: Senior Utilities Engineers in the Water Branch and Sean Wilson in the Audit and Compliance Branch .
- ❑ The first level reviewer shall send the outgoing correspondence to the second level reviewer for approval or signature. The second level reviewers are Ken Louie for the Audit and Compliance Branch and Program and Project Supervisors for the Water Branch. The second level reviewer shall send the outgoing correspondence to the “Third Level” manager for review and signature. The Third Level managers are the Branch Managers. The Division Director will approve and sign the outgoing correspondence only after the Program Managers have approved the letter.
- ❑ If a first level reviewer is not in the office, the outgoing correspondence will go to the next higher level or the reviewer’s designated replacement for review and approval. All correspondence must be reviewed by someone other than the final signer.
- ❑ All non-project-related outgoing correspondence will be signed by project managers or higher-level managers.
- ❑ Pink forms will be attached to Chrony File copy.
- ❑ For outgoing correspondence to be signed by the Executive Director, use the checklist in Appendix E.

#### **4. Protests**

1. A typical protest is written as follows:



In the Application of Union Pacific Railroad Company,  
Keene Water System (0434W), For Authorization to  
Increase Rates and For Interim Rate Relief.

Decision No. 03-10-073

Application No. 04-11-004  
(Filed November 4, 2004)

### PROTEST OF THE WATER DIVISION

Pursuant to Rules 6(a)(2) and 44.1 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure of the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission), the Water Division (WD) files this protest to the application of Union Pacific Railroad Company, Keene Water System (KWS), for authorization to increase rates and for interim rate relief.

In its application, KWS has requested for a general rate increase pursuant to Decision 03-10-073, which directed KWS to file an application. Pending a final determination on KWS' application, KWS requests that the Commission establish interim rates at the levels recommended by the WD in its April 17, 2003 Ratemaking Report. Applicants also proposed that a workshop be held with the residents of the Upper and Lower Keene Groups to discuss alternatives to KWS' ownership and control of facilities located downstream of the master meters that are used to serve these users and to discuss billing and payment procedures.

WD's position is that KWS is owned by Union Pacific Railroad Company that is responsible for installing meters at each end user in the system. KWS is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the delivery system all the way to the end user including the meter. For ratemaking purpose, KWS should be treated as a Class A water company, therefore, KWS' request for an interim rates are not necessary.

As the matter now stands, WD believes that a workshop may be necessary to protect the interest of the ratepayers. WD proposes (1) the Administrative Law Judge to hold a workshop with the residents of the Upper and Lower Keene Groups to discuss alternatives to KWS' ownership and

control of facilities located downstream of the master meters that are used to serve these users and to discuss billing and payment procedures; (2) to investigate the size of the rate increase.

Accordingly, WD recommends that public participation hearings and evidentially hearings be held in service areas of KWS to receive public comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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Peter T. Liu  
Project Manager  
Water Division

California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 703-1390

December 1, 2004

Fax: (415) 703-4426

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have this day served a copy of the foregoing document “Water Division’s Protest to Union Pacific Railroad Company, Keene Water System’s application for authorization to increase rates and for interim rate relief” upon all known parties of record by mailing, by first-class mail, a copy thereof properly addressed to each party.

Dated December 1, 2004, at San Francisco, California.

/s/ Lilia Oliva

Lilia Oliva

NOTICE

Parties should notify the Process Office, Public Utilities Commission, 505 Van Ness Avenue, Room 2000, San Francisco, CA 94102, of any change of address to ensure that they continue to receive documents. You must indicate the proceeding number on the service list on which your name appears.

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The Commission’s policy is to schedule hearings (meetings, workshops, etc.) in locations that are accessible to people with disabilities. To verify that a particular location is accessible, call: Calendar Clerk (415) 703-1203.

If specialized accommodations for the disabled are needed, e.g., sign language interpreters, those making the arrangements must call the Public Advisor at (415) 703-2074, TTY 1-866-836-7825 or (415) 703-5282 at least three working days in advance of the event.

## **5. Data Requests<sup>1</sup>**

**State of California**

**Public Utilities Commission  
San Francisco**

### **M E M O R A N D U M**

**Date : January 15, 2002**

**To : Division Directors**

**From : Wesley M. Franklin, Executive Director**

**Subject : Data Request Protocol**

We have after legal review adopted this data request protocol in order to eliminate duplication of data requests made of utilities, and to make more efficient use of in-house information. First, all divisions shall inquire of other implicated divisions before issuing data requests to utilities, to check that the same or similar information has not already been requested. Second, all divisions shall alert the other implicated divisions to data requests to utilities, as they are issued, in order to forestall duplicate requests, and to alert the sister divisions that potentially useful information will be coming in to the CPUC and available to them.

1. Each division (CSD, Telco, Energy, Water, Rail Safety, ORA, Legal) is to immediately designate a contact person to whom to direct data requests from the other divisions, so that a Data Request Coordinator List for the CPUC may be compiled and distributed. (See attached for guide to usual distribution.)
2. All DRs issued from a CPUC division shall copy (cc) the designated contact person, who will distribute them to staff people within the division who are assigned to the same or related subject matter.
3. Before issuing any data request to a utility, the originating division is to provide a draft of the DR to the designated contact person in each other implicated division. The contact person is to forward the draft DR to staff people within the division who are assigned to the same or related subject matter, and confirm whether the requested information has, to their knowledge, already been requested by them or others in the agency. The contact person shall advise the originating division (specifically, the responsible staff person who

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C for a Data Request format and Appendix D for ORA's Master Data Request

should be named on the draft DR) within 2 days, so that the DR may issue as expeditiously as possible.

Consistent with the May 1999 manual on the “Handling and Using Information Provided by Utilities Pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 583,” all agency staff will continue to access all information provided by a utility to CPUC staff regardless of the staff’s function in the agency. If the information is no longer available or if it is impracticable to reassemble it or to use it for a particular project, the staff may request a copy of the information from the utility, referencing the original data request.

#### Attachment

#### DATA REQUEST DISTRIBUTION

##### FROM:

##### TO:

Energy	CSD, ORA, Legal
Telco	CSD, ORA, Legal
Rail Safety	CSD, Legal
Water	CSD, ORA, Legal
ORA	[Telco, Energy, Water <i>or</i> Rail], CSD, Legal
CSD	[Telco, Energy, Water <i>or</i> Rail], CSD, Legal

## **6. Resolutions**

(see Appendix B for an example)

Each Resolution should have the following structural components described below, but in addition, the Resolution should be:

- Clear (so that the reader knows the writer’s intent),
- Concise (free of unessential material),
- Continuous (readers concentration is not interrupted unnecessarily),
- Comprehensive (stand alone document that provides the reader with enough information that one needs to have an understanding of the matter),
- Grammatically correct.

The analyst reviewing the Advice Letter or whatever triggers the Resolution (occasionally a resolution can be triggered by a letter, not from the utility) has the most knowledge about the subject in the Commission. Accordingly, the analyst’s most difficult task is to put oneself in the shoes of the Commissioners. What is it that the Commissioners need to know in order to understand and deliberate on the Resolution?

The Resolution should have the following components:

### **Summary**

- What is being asked for.
- What the resolution does. (Grants, Denies, Modifies)
- Why, rationale for disposition of the request.
- List Protestants, if any. (Summary of Issues)

### **Background**

- Brief history that answers: Who, What, When How, Why.
- Narrative of what the utilities requesting and any other facts that provide context for the Resolution. .

### **Notice**

- All Advice Letters are noticed in the calendar; note that letters that require resolution should also go on the calendar, e.g., request for a deviation for example?
- Were all relevant parties served? Were customers noticed?

### **Protests**

- List all the protests and responses (note dates). Also note anomalies such as Withdrawn, Late, Other.
- State the basis of the protest (quoting as much as possible from the protest).
- State the utility's response to the protest (again, quoting as much as possible from the protest).

### **Discussion**

- Take up each one of the items and/or issues requested by the utility.
- Discuss why the requested item is either (un)reasonable and the reason(s) why.
- State the disposition of the request and the protest. (Grant, Deny, Deny without Prejudice)

Note:

1. The discussion can be organized several different ways... The important thing is to remember is that all of the items discussed above need to be included.
2. Here is a helpful mnemonic --- IRAC.
  - a. Issue. Clearly define the issue.
  - b. Rule. What is the relevant law, decision, general order, tariff that is controlling..
  - c. Analysis. The analysis is the reasoning that should be the application of the issue to the rule, i.e. a tariff, decision, general order, law.
  - d. Conclusion. The ultimate disposition of the request. Approved, denied, etc.

## **Compliance**

- A summary of the utility’s compliance status. If any items are outstanding, the resolution may be made contingent on compliance.

## **Comments**

- PU Code Section 311(g) requires circulation of draft resolutions for comment, unless the requirement is either waived or exempted. Filed comments are acknowledged and summarized in this section, comments, if adopted, are reflected in the other parts of the resolution.

## **Findings**

- A positive statement of the existence or non-existence or state of a thing or event, one or more findings is needed for each issue.

## **Ordering Paragraphs**

- An order that resolves the issues presented in the resolution. Keep them as succinct as possible.

If one of these sections is very long or has several different topics, place a ‘headline’ in the text as a break to assist the reader by noticing the change. For example, in the **Protest** section, if, after the narrative describing a party’s protest, a break before the utility’s reply can be described as, “**Acme Water Company’s replies to the City’s protest and rebuts the City’s claim that its actions are in violation of D.05-XX-YYY.**” See the attached example of a Resolution that follows this guide.

## **7. Decisions**

1. Some guidelines for writing decisions are contained in Appendix C. Use a prior decision as an example.

## **8. Posting**

1. From the CPUC01 Library in PowerDocs, the Water Branch Secretary will save all (1) RES-C files thirty days prior to each Commission meeting to WebPub for it to be approved (by the Branch Chief) for posting on prerequisite date. (2) RES-A files ten days prior to each Commission meeting, (3) RES-F files on Commission meeting days.

## 9. Written Documents Generally

### Proofreading Standards<sup>2</sup>

1. Read each document twice.
2. Slow down your reading rate.
3. Read numbers digit by digit.
4. Read out loud to someone else who is reading with you if possible.

### Writing Standards

#### General

5. George Orwell established these guidelines in a 1946 essay. The problems he discussed are not still problems today, but the guidelines make sense nonetheless:
  - a. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
  - b. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
  - c. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
  - d. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
  - e. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
  - f. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

### Abbreviations and Contractions

6. Use a contraction rather than an abbreviation. For example, for California Water Service Company use "CalWater" rather than CWSC.
7. Do not use verb contractions in Commission documents. For example: use "do not" instead of "don't" and use "is not" instead of "isn't."

### Tense: past versus present.

8. Mainly use the past tense.

### Punctuation in a quotation.

9. Periods and commas go inside the closing quotation mark. Colons and semi-colons follow the quotation mark. Exclamation marks and question marks can go either place.

### Ellipsis

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<sup>2</sup> From "Mistake-Free Grammar and Proofreading" CareerTrack Course



10. When you omit something from the middle of a quotation, indicate the omission with an ellipsis, which consists of three dots originally separated by spaces ( . . . ) but is now a special symbol in Word created by typing “Alt-Control-.” (...). An ellipsis is not punctuation. If you need a comma or period, put it in the appropriate place. Example: He has enough to satisfy his wants..., but he is still greedy for more.

#### Dangling phrases.

11. Do not leave your participial and gerundial phrases dangling. Wrong: Thinking over the conundrum, the answer became apparent to Mary. Right: Thinking over the conundrum, Mary discovered the answer. (Mary, not the answer, did the thinking.)

#### Pronoun Agreement.

12. Make certain that your pronouns agree with the noun or nouns. Recently, English speakers have come to use they as a singular pronoun in cases where the gender of the person in question is unclear. In formal writing, however, this is not accepted practice. The pronoun they is always plural. Wrong: If anyone thinks that good writing does not require rewriting, they are sadly mistaken. Right: If anyone thinks that good writing does not require rewriting, she or he (or, he or she) is sadly mistaken. A better alternative is to restructure the sentence: Anyone who thinks that good writing does not require rewriting is sadly mistaken. However if the pronoun refers to both males and females, you should avoid sexist language and use the plural. Instead of “Each manager must meet with his staff”, say “Managers must meet with their staffs.”
13. The proper pronoun for a utility is it, not they.

#### Subject and Verb Agreement

14. The subject and verb must agree in number. A singular subject needs a singular verb; a plural subject needs a plural verb.
15. Ignore phrases and clauses that separate the subject from the verb. The box containing all of the missing materials was found in Fayetteville. Program managers, along with the speaker, have to meet at the seminar.
16. Use a singular verb after each, nobody, someone, anyone, anybody, everyone, every, one, another, much, and everybody.
17. Use a plural verb after both, few, many, others and several.
18. Collective nouns: If the group is acting as one unit, (team, committee, board) use a singular verb. If the members of the group are acting separately, use a plural verb.

19. When two or more subjects are joined by and, use a plural verb. When two or more singular subjects are joined by or or nor, use a singular verb. If the subjects are of different numbers, make the verb agree with the subject nearest the verb.

### GRAMMAR and USAGE STANDARDS

20. The plural of a year does not use an apostrophe. "1990s" is correct; "1990's" is wrong.
21. Use a comma before the final and or or in a series.
22. Do not use a comma after a date, unless the date is at the end of a phrase that would normally end in a comma anyway.
23. Avoid separating two words with a slash "/" - in most cases a simple "and" will do, or use a hyphen (owner-president). Do not use "and/or." As above, a simple "and" will do.
24. "There" = location (There it is.) "Their" = possessive (it belongs to them) "They're" = contraction of "They are"
25. Use "that" instead of "which" whenever possible. Use "which" only when the word "that" is too awkward. Which is preceded by a comma. That is not.
26. Try not end a sentence with a preposition (common prepositions include: of, by, with, at, in, on, to, for, between, from, and through.)
27. Use italics for emphasis and to refer to the title of a court proceeding. If the emphasis is in a quote put (emphasis added) or (emphasis in original) as appropriate after the quotation.

#### Use of words

28. The word gravamen is a legal term that means the part of a charge or accusation that weighs most substantially against the accused. It is handy when you are writing an analysis and addressing multiple issues.

#### Misuse of words

29. Amount is used with nouns that have no plural (confusion, flattery, money, timber). Number is used with plural nouns (children, weapons, problems, bills). Similarly with less and fewer: "In order to weigh less we should consume fewer calories." Majority should only be used with countable nouns (nouns with plurals). Do not say "the majority of the estate." Use "the greater part" or, even better, "most."
30. May represents a possibility that still exists, while might represents a possibility that existed at some time in the past but did not materialize. Consequently, the sentence "the mentally ill man may not have committed suicide had he been kept in the hospital" may sound correct, but it means that it is still possible that the man did not commit suicide. Lots of people make this mistake.

31. At this moment in time is unnecessarily wordy. This moment is always in time. At this moment is enough, or preferably now.
32. USE YOUR SPELL CHECKER
33. USE YOUR GRAMMAR CHECKER
34. DON'T TRUST EITHER ONE

### Literary Citations

1. Put references in your text immediately after the first sentence in which the reference is cited. Do not put references at the end of the paragraph in which it is cited.
2. Proper reference format within the text is: (Lastname 1999: Page#) -- where Lastname=the author's last name, 1999=year of publication - if you are citing a direct quote or data, you must include a : [colon] after the year, followed by the Page Number(s) from which the quote came. Otherwise, the page number(s) is optional.
3. Put references before the final period in the sentence. An example of a proper use of in text references is: ... and the population reached 55,000 in 1995 (Wright 1996: 337).
4. Always cite the reference source for information you obtained from somewhere other than your own mind. To not do this is plagiarism. If several contiguous sentences, or an entire paragraph, of information comes from the same source, you need only reference it once in that paragraph.
5. "References Cited" should be used instead of "Bibliography" at the end of your report.
6. The proper format for References Cited is:  
 Lastname, Firstname. Year. Book Title. CityPublishedIn: Publisher.  
 Lastname, Firstname. Year. Chapter Title. In Book Title, ed.  
 Firstname Lastname, pp.#-##. CityPublishedIn: Publisher. e.g. -- Smith, John P. 1556.  
 Introduction. In T.C. Barnwood, ed., Geographies, pp. 3-12, London: Cheshire.  
 Lastname, Firstname. Year. Article Title. Journal Title Vol#(Issue#):Page##-##. e.g. -- Smith, John, and Harney, Percy. 1910. New Discoveries in South America. Geography 12(3):56-61.

For example: San Francisco Pub. Util. Comm'n & San Francisco Dep't of the Env't, The Electricity Resource Plan (revised Dec. 2002) p. 68.

### Legal Citations

7. Court opinions are widely published in books called reporters. This is where most citations to case law are made. There are many different reporters. The California Reporter, the

California Appellate Reporter, the Pacific Reporter, the Federal Supplement Reporter, and the Supreme Court Reporter are examples.

8. The citation manual created by the editors of four law journals, the Columbia Law Review, the Harvard Law Review, the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, and The Yale Law Journal, referred to as The Bluebook<sup>3</sup>, is the most widely used codification of national citation norms. The Bluebook governs the citation practices of the majority of U.S. student-edited law journals and has through its successive editions shaped the citation education and resulting citation habits of most U.S. lawyers. However, the Commission uses a format slightly different from The Bluebook, and you may notice this when reading Commission opinions.
9. Most cases are cited something like this: State v. Black 570 P.2d 489 (CO, 1983) where State v. Black is the name of the case, and like all titles, must be either underlined or italicized. 570 is the volume number of the reporter where case information is found. P. 2d is the name of the reporter where the Court opinion is found, in this case, the Pacific Reporter, second series. 489 is the page number in the Reporter where the case opinion begins. (CO, 1983) is the Court where the case was heard (in this case, Colorado) and the year in which the decision was issued.
10. Sometimes you need to note the specific page within an opinion. So, if you wrote the citation: State v. Black 570 P.2d 489, 493 (CO, 1983), this would indicate that while the case opinion begins on page 489, the specific material you want people to notice begins on page 493. If the citation is to a dissenting, concurring, or plurality opinion or to dictum that fact should be reported in separate parentheses following the date.
11. Although it looks awkward to read, legal citations are usually placed directly into the text of a brief. In the narrative parts of a brief, complete citations are used the first time they appear, but may be abbreviated afterwards as follows: If the full citation is: State v. Black, 570 P.2d 489, 491 (CO, 1983) the subsequent citations may be abbreviated as: Black, 570 P.2d at 493 (if page 493 is where the specific information is located.) If the citation is a Commission Decision found in the bound volumes use D.93-02-013, 48 CPUC 2d 107, at 115.
12. Sometimes an opinion may be published in more than one reporter. It is good manners to cite parallel sources.

General Abbreviations:

The following abbreviations are commonly used in legal citation:

Abbreviation	Meaning
§	Section
USC	United States Code

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<sup>3</sup> The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, Cambridge: Harvard Law Review Association, most current edition

¶	Paragraph
Const.	Constitution
art.	Article
amend.	Amendment
Cir.	Circuit (referring to Circuit Courts)
ann.	Annotated
CCA or Cal. Code. Ann.	California Code Annotated
cl.	Clause
2d, 3d	Second Series, Third Series (second or third set of volumes for a particular Reporter)

Note: If you need to say "section" at the beginning of a statement, spell it out, but if it's within a sentence, you may use the § symbol, available in Word by clicking Insert, Symbol, Special Characters. You can also set a hot key combination for this symbol.

13. Laws and Statutes are cited as follows:

California Law: California Code Annotated 00-0-000 (3) (a) (or Cal. Code Ann.) abbreviated form: § 00-0-000 (3) (a), CCA or Cal. Pub. Util. Code § 1001 or SB 1389 (Chapter 568, Statutes of 2002)  
Federal Law: 10 USC section 3069 (this means volume 10 of the United States Code, section 3069)  
abbreviated form: 10 USC § 3069

14. Constitutional materials are cited as follows:

California Constitution:	Article II, Section 1, California Constitution -- abbreviated form: Art. II, § 1, Cal. Const.
US Constitution:	Article II, Section 1, United States Constitution -- abbreviated form: Art. II, § 1, US Const.
Bill of Rights:	First Amendment to the United States Constitution

15. Case Law: As noted earlier, the general form for legal citations is: Case Name, Reporter information (year)

16. Reporters commonly used in researching California cases are listed below with abbreviations:

U.S. -- U.S. Reporter (covers US Supreme Court decisions)  
F. Supp -- Federal Supplement Reporter (contains Federal District Court opinions)  
L.Ed, L.Ed.2d -- Lawyer's Edition Reporter (contains US Supreme Court decisions)  
F., F.2d, F.3d -- Federal Reporter (covers Federal Circuit Court of Appeals decisions)  
S. Ct. -- Supreme Court Reporter (covers US Supreme Court decisions)  
Cal. -- California Reporter (covers California Supreme Court decisions)

P. or P.2d -- Pacific Reporter (covers state court decisions from Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming)

17. Other regional reporters such as the Southern Reporter, Atlantic Reporter, etc. may sometimes be cited.

Examples:

18. A California decision:

State v. Jones, 100 Cal. 271, 275, 485 P. 2d 123, 127 (1995) abbreviated form: Jones, 100 Cal. at 275. Notice that the case is reported in both the California Reporter (Cal.) and the Pacific Reporter (P. 2d). We know it's a California Case because it is in the California Reporter, so the state abbreviation is left out of the parentheses where the date is listed.

19. Another state's decision:

State v. Smith, 215 P. 2d 214, 225 (CO, 1997) abbreviated form: Smith, 215 P. 2d at 225  
Notice that the out of state case cites the state and the year (CO, 1997). This is because the case citation comes from the Pacific Reporter, and in this situation you can't tell which state decided the case.

20. Federal Court decision:

Smith v. Jones, 123 F. Supp. 456, 461 (D. Cal. 1995) abbreviated form: Smith, 123 F. Supp. at 461  
Notice that D. Cal. means the case originated in the Federal District Court for California.

21. Federal Circuit Court of Appeals decision:

Anderson v. Wilson, 3 F. 3d 292 (9th Cir., 1996) abbreviated form: Anderson, 3 F. 3d at 302  
9th Cir. means the case was heard by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

22. U.S. Supreme Court Decision:

Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113, 93 S. Ct 705, 35 L. Ed. 2d 147 (1973) abbreviated form: Roe, 410 U.S. at 116. Notice that Supreme Court decisions can appear in three different reporters.

23. A decision not yet published in any reporter: (This only applies to a very recent decision)

State v. Doe, No. 98-000 (Cal. April 25, 1998). 98-000 is the case number. The date the Court handed down its decision is in parentheses.

24. A Commission Decision

Re San Diego Gas & Electric Company (Valley-Rainbow) 2002 Cal. PUC LEXIS 919 at \*9 - \*10, Decision (D.) 02-12-066, mimeo at 7 (parallel citations) or D.93-02-013, 48 CPUC 2d 107, at 115.

## Appendix A

### Filing System Designations

	File No.	Title	Contact
DIVISION	505	ANNUAL REPORT	WYT
ADMINISTRATIVE	515	BUDGET/FINANCIAL	SNR
	520	CORRESPONDENCE	DRS
	521	COMPLAINTS	SNR
	525	EQUIPMENT SYSTEMS	DRS
	530	INQUIRIES/GENERAL CORRES.	DRS
	530-1	Info Reqstd Encl	WYT
	535	LEGISLATION	SNR
	540	MEETINGS	
	540-1	COMMISSION AGENDA	DRS
	540-2	PAST AGENDA	DRS
	540-3	NEXT AGENDA	DRS
	545	BUILDING	SNR
	550	STAFF ORGANIZATION	LGO
	555-1	FORMS	DRS
	561-1	NARUC	LGO
	561-2	CWA	LGO
	561-3	NAWC	LGO
	561-4	AWWC	LGO
	565	POLICIES & PROCEDURES	FLC
	570	SUBSCRIPTIONS	LGO
	575	TRAVEL	LGO
	575-1	TRAVEL EXPENSES	LGO
	580	SPECIAL STUDIES	DRS
COMPANY FILE	600	CERTIFICATION	DRS
	601	RATES	DRS
	602	GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE	DRS
	602-10	NON-COMPANY SPECIFIC	DRS
	602-19	ADVICE LETTER	DRS
		CORRESPONDENCE	
	603	BONDARY EXTENSIONS	DRS
	606	PUBLIC FIRE PROTECTION	DRS
	607	CONTRACTS	DRS
	609	WATER QUALITY	DRS
	612	STOCKS/BONDS	DRS
	615	WATER SUPPLY	DRS
	650	COMPLIANCE	DRS
	685	SERVICE	DRS

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**WATER DIVISION**

**Item #**  
**RESOLUTION W-\_\_\_\_**  
**AUGUST 25, 2005**

**R E S O L U T I O N**

Resolution W-\_\_\_\_ Great Oaks Water Company (Great Oaks) requests a waiver of the requirements of the Commission's General Rate Case Plan for Class A Water Utilities, Decision 04-06-018, to file its next general rate case by an advice letter instead of an application. Approved.

By Advice Letter 172, filed on June 10, 2005

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**Summary**

Great Oaks requests approval to file its Commission required General Rate Case (GRC) pursuant to Decision (D.) 04-06-018 by advice letter rather than by application. The Office of Ratepayer Advocates (ORA) protested the advice letter. ORA recommends rejection without prejudice of the advice letter because it "...violate[s] statute or Commission orders..." and the relief requested requires consideration in a formal hearing.

This resolution denies ORA's protest and approves Great Oaks' Advice Letter 172 and grants its request for a waiver to file its GRC by advice letter.

**Background**

In D.04-06-018, the Commission addressed implementation of Public Utilities Code (PUCode) § 455.2 (AB 2838, Chapter 1147, 2002, Canciamilla)<sup>4</sup> which requires water

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<sup>4</sup> PUCode § 455.2 is copied here in its entirety. It will be referenced frequently in this Resolution.

455.2. (a) The commission shall issue its final decision on a general rate case application of a water corporation with greater than 10,000 service connections in a manner that ensures that the commission's decision becomes effective on the first day of the first



## Appendix B

companies with greater than 10,000 service connections to file a general rate case application every three years. Great Oaks was due to file its application in July 2005 pursuant to the filing schedule in D.04-06-018 (Appendix, p.18, slip opinion).

On May 24, 2005, pursuant to Rule 48(a) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Office of Ratepayer Advocates (ORA) requested an extension of time from the Executive Director to file its Notice of Deficiency until July 8, 2005. On June 9, 2005, the Executive Director denied that request because such a delay may jeopardize timely rate relief for Great Oaks pursuant to PUCode § 455.2. In addition, the Executive Director told Great Oaks that it may, pursuant to Section G of D.04-06-018, request the Commission for a waiver to file its GRC by advice letter rather than by application. On June 10, 2005, Great Oaks filed the extant advice letter. By memorandum dated June 13, 2005 to the Commission's Docket Office, the ORA reversed its position of May 24th, and it was now willing to accept Great Oaks' filing for a general rate case application.

On June 15, 2005, the Executive Director wrote a letter to Great Oaks, with a copy to the Director of ORA, strongly urging Great Oaks to continue its course of processing its GRC by advice letter.

## Notice

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test year in the general rate increase application.

(b) If the commission's decision is not effective in accordance with subdivision (a), the applicant may file a tariff implementing interim rates that may be increased by an amount equal to the rate of inflation as compared to existing rates. The interim rates shall be effective on the first day of the first test year in the general rate case application. These interim rates shall be subject to refund and shall be adjusted upward or downward back to the interim rate effective date, consistent with the final rates adopted by the commission. The commission may authorize a lesser increase in interim rates if the commission finds the rates to be in the public interest. If the presiding officer in the case determines that the commission's decision cannot become effective on the first day of the first test year due to actions by the water corporation, the presiding officer or commission may require a different effective date for the interim rates or final rates.

(c) The commission shall establish a schedule to require every water corporation subject to the rate case plan for water corporations to file an application pursuant to the plan every three years. The plan shall include a provision to allow the filing requirement to be waived upon mutual agreement of the commission and the water corporation.

(d) The requirements of subdivisions (a) and (b) may be waived at any time by mutual consent of the executive director of the commission and the water corporation.

## Appendix B

Notice of Advice Letter 172 was made by publication in the Commission's Daily Calendar. Great Oaks states that a copy of the Advice Letter was mailed and distributed in accordance with Section III-G of General Order 96-A.

### Protests

#### **ORA protests.**

Advice Letter 172 was protested by ORA on June 30, 2005.<sup>5</sup> In its protest, ORA alleges that Advice Letter 172 violates PUCode § 455.2 and D.04-06-018. ORA contends that the relief requested is "...inappropriate for the advice letter process but requires consideration in a formal hearing." ORA further says that Water Division should reject Advice Letter 172 without prejudice pursuant to D.05-01-032.<sup>6</sup>

ORA raises the following issues which will be discussed in turn. First, ORA states that § 455.2(c)<sup>7</sup> requires all Class A water companies<sup>8</sup> to file a general rate case application every three years.

Second, ORA states that D.04-06-018 does "...provide[s] for a waiver of the General Rate Case filing deadline, this does not amount to an exemption from the New Rate Case Plan requirements." ORA state that it does not agree to waive the filing of the application. ORA also notes that Great Oaks failed to file a timely waiver request of the General Rate Case. Great Oaks request was filed more than a month after Great Oaks tendered its proposed application. ORA insists that Water Division reject Advice Letter 172 in accord with D.05-01-032.

ORA says that Great Oaks failed to show the general rate case filing was not needed, and ORA was ready and able to process the Great Oaks general rate case application, and Great Oaks did not show that its application would not have been processed in a timely manner.

Third, ORA alleges that Great Oaks would exceed the authority for filing a general rate case as provided in Ordering Paragraph No. 9 of D.92-03-093 which limits the projected annual operating revenues, including the requested increase to \$750,000 and only to Class B, C, and D water utilities.<sup>9</sup> ORA also asserts that, contrary to PUCode §

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<sup>5</sup> ORA in its protest of Advice Letter 172 also protests Advice letter 173. This Resolution only addresses the protest of Advice Letter 172.

<sup>6</sup> Third Interim Opinion Adopting Certain Requirements Regarding Advice Letter Filing, Service, Suspension, and Disposition.

<sup>7</sup> All Code sections will refer to the Public Utilities Code.

<sup>8</sup> The minimum number of connections for a Class A water company is 10,000. Class B water companies (fewer than 10,000 and greater than 5,000 connections) have their GRC's processed by Advice Letter.

<sup>9</sup> Class B, C, and D all have fewer than 10,000 service connections.

## Appendix B

455.2 and D.04-06-018, the showing in an advice letter is far less than what is required in an application. In addition, ORA cites a case<sup>10</sup> that they argue supports their position wherein the Commission rejected a Pacific Bell advice letter and required the utility to file a formal application to make a full showing on its request.

Finally, ORA alleges that approving Advice Letter 172 would “eviscerate” the rate case plan in D.04-06-018 and undo the ratepayer protections of PUCode § 455.2. ORA states that an evidentiary hearing and a Commission order are necessary to resolve Great Oaks’ request.

### **Great Oaks replies to ORA’s protest.**

In response, Great Oaks filed its reply to the ORA protest on July 7, 2005. Great Oaks focuses on sections (c) of the statute that contain waiver provisions. Great Oaks argues that the “...waiver language of (c) clearly contemplates that variances may occur and are authorized so long as both parties, the Commission and the water corporation, agree. Moreover, Great Oaks argues that ORA’s citation of the *Pacific Bell* case is not on point. The Commission exercised its discretion in that case where it could have authorized the advice letter process for Pacific Bell if it chose to do so.

Finally, Great Oaks asserts that its request is consistent with Standard Practice U-8-W<sup>11</sup> and D.05-01-032. As to the former, Great Oaks cites with emphasis, paragraph 18, p.6 that says, “...or the utility has been so authorized, the Commission may accept a showing by advice letter, provided justification is fully set forth therein...” Great Oaks goes on to say, again with emphasis, “Remember, however, that formal proceedings can be quite expensive. If the filing can be disposed of informally, it should be.”

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Commission should accept the filing of Great Oaks Advice Letter 172**

Before addressing the reasonableness of Great Oaks’s request, we look first at the threshold issue of whether or not we can accept the advice letter itself. While PUCode § 455.2 (c) mandates the filing of an application, it also allows the Commission the flexibility to waive the filing requirement “... upon mutual agreement of the Commission and the water corporation.” In D.04-06-018, our decision establishing a Rate Case Plan, we stated that a waiver in the instance where Commission staff and the water utility agree that a General Rate Case is not needed, the request should be made via the Advice Letter

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<sup>10</sup> *Pacific Bell v. PUC*, 79 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 269 (Cal. Ct. App., 2000)

<sup>11</sup> Standard Practices are manuals developed by staff that provide procedural details for commission staff, utilities, and interested parties on the formatting and required content that must be made for utility filings. While some Standard Practices are adopted by the Commission, others are not. Standard Practice U-8-W has not been adopted by the Commission. The quotes herein, though, are accurate representations of D.05-01-032.

## Appendix B

process. The language in the decision was limited to the instance where there could be a delay in filing<sup>12</sup> the GRC. It was silent on the possibility of other types of waivers.

ORA raises a significant issue in its protest regarding the requirement in General Order 96-A pursuant D.92-03-093 that limits the Advice Letter process for General Rate Cases to Class B, C, and D water companies and a total revenue impact of \$750,000. In both instances, Great Oaks does not qualify.

Turning again to General Order 96-A, parties are allowed to seek exceptions as allowed in Section XV<sup>13</sup>. While not dismissing the authority in Section G of D.04-06-018 that Great Oaks claims in its Advice Letter 172, we will also consider the authority pursuant to General Order 96-A, Section XV. The two can be harmonized and are not in conflict. Further, to the extent Great Oaks can seek a waiver by Advice Letter, fidelity to PUCode § 455.2(c) is also achieved.

We agree with Great Oaks that ORA's reference to the *Pacific Bell* is not on point.

We do agree, however, with ORA that a Commission Order is necessary, and this Resolution is that Order.

### **Great Oaks request to file its General Rate Case by Advice Letter is reasonable.**

Turning now to the reasonableness of Great Oaks' request, we note that it is only one district, and it is the smallest Class A water company with approximately 20,000 connections. It is closer in size and operation to Class B water companies than it is to some of the other Class A water companies that have multiple districts, hundreds of thousands of connections, and are subsidiaries of holding companies. Great Oaks is considerably less complex a utility than other Class A water companies.

The less formal Advice Letter process is much more streamlined than the formal Application process since there is no adversarial hearing process. Nevertheless, Water Division staff will still exercise critical review. With an Advice Letter GRC, there will be a more efficient allocation of staff resources. There would be no need of an Administrative Law Judge or court reporter. More than likely, a staff attorney would not be required. Great Oaks would also save time and money which would reduce the regulatory expense that is recoverable in rates.

There would be no diminution of review by Water Division staff with the Advice Letter process. Ratepayers would receive the same, if not better, representation. Water Division has the expertise and the experience to review GRC's for Class B companies

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<sup>12</sup> See p. 25, Section G, slip opinion. The dicta addresses the situation where a GRC filing is not needed.

<sup>13</sup> General Order 96-A, Section XV, Exceptions to the operation of this Order will be authorized upon a proper showing by any interested party.

## Appendix B

which are very similar to Great Oaks. As a truly redundant measure, ORA may still, if it so chooses, participate in the Advice Letter process as a Protestant.

We are also concerned that ORA's staff may be subject to new circumstances that could further delay the processing of Great Oaks General Rate Case if it were filed by application. We note, with some displeasure, our record in meeting the timely relief for water company GRC's as mandated by PUCode § 455.2. All suffer --- water companies not getting timely rate relief, ORA staff working out of sequence, Administrative Law Judge and Water Division staff often times reducing the time allotted to them in the Rate Case Plan to complete a proposed decision for the Commission's consideration, and customers subject to multiple rate changes if interim rates are imposed and rate uncertainty. Finally, we note that, in this case, ratepayers are better off at the outset because the cost of Great Oaks pursuing its General Rate Case by Advice Letter rather than by Application is less costly. Great Oaks' lower regulatory cost is passed on to its ratepayers. It is reasonable to allow Great Oaks to file its General Rate Case by Advice Letter rather than by Application.

### **There is no need for a hearing.**

There are no evidentiary facts in dispute in this advice letter. We decide Great Oaks' request in this Order today based on our interpretation of PUCode § 455.2, D.04-06-018, D.05-01-032, and General Order 96-A. ORA's protest should be denied.

### **This Resolution is not a precedent.**

Finally, we affirm that the waiver that we grant Great Oaks today is not a precedent. It is an exception for one utility's specific request. There is a confluence of circumstances here that together persuade us to approve Advice Letter 172. We expect that circumstance will improve as we gain experience implementing PUCode § 455.2. Other water companies should not expect that we would offer them carte blanche approval if they should also request similar requests for a waiver of the application process.

We may seek in R.03-09-005 or some other forum, further guidance on waiver processes for implementing PUCode § 455.2(c) so as to more clarity to all practitioners in the water industry.

## **Comments**

PUCode §311(g)(1) provides that this resolution must be served on all parties and subject to at least 30 days public review and comment prior to a vote of the Commission.

PUCode §311(g)(2) provides that this 30-day period may be waived or reduced upon stipulation of all parties in the proceeding.

The 30-day comment period for the draft resolution was neither waived nor reduced. Accordingly, this draft resolution was mailed to parties for comments, and will

## Appendix B

be placed on the Commission's agenda no earlier than 30 days from the date of mailing of this resolution to the parties.

Comments were received from \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. Replies were received from \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. .

### Findings

1. Great Oaks Water Company filed Advice Letter 172 requesting approval to file its Commission required General Rate Case pursuant to Decision (D.) 04-06-018 by advice letter.
2. Great Oaks is the smallest Class A water company with approximately 20,000 service connections.
3. The Office of Ratepayer Advocates protested Great Oaks' Advice Letter 172.
4. ORA claims Advice Letter 172 violates PUCode § 455.2, D.04-06-018, and D.05-01-018, and General Order 96-A.
5. General Order 96-A allows parties to seek exceptions to the General Order.
6. The Advice Letter process is more streamlined than the application process.
7. Ratepayers, the Commission, and Great Oaks are all better off if Great Oaks is allowed to file its General Rate Case by Advice Letter rather than by Application.
8. ORA's request for hearing is denied.
9. Great Oaks request is reasonable.
10. ORA's protest is denied.

### Therefore it is ordered that:

1. Great Oaks Water Company's Advice Letter 172 is approved.
2. This resolution is effective today.

## Appendix B

I certify that the foregoing resolution was duly introduced, passed and adopted at a conference of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California held on August 25, 2005; the following Commissioners voting favorably thereon:

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STEVE LARSON  
Executive Director

## **WRITING A DECISION<sup>14</sup>**

One of the primary tasks of the ALJ is writing well-prepared opinions. Parts II and III of this manual are designed to help the ALJ with decision-writing, particularly findings of fact and conclusions of law. Part III is the Division's Style Guide for ALJs, Staff Examiners, and stenographers. It covers format, language, spelling, clarity, and consistency for Commission decisions.

We do not all have the same expository style. Variations in writing style are acceptable if the end product communicates well.

Your opinions should:

1. Be grammatically correct and read well.
2. Be well-organized and address all material issues. Issues that were raised in the proceeding which are not material should be identified and disposed of with an explanation why they are immaterial.
3. Explain the positions of the parties.
4. Resolve all contested material issues with a cogent discussion on the merits.
5. Apprise parties why they won or lost on litigated issues.
6. Explain Commission policy so that readers can understand the basis of the policy.
7. Explain any departure from established Commission policy.
8. Contain adequate findings of fact and conclusions of law.

The opinion should be written so that a lay person can understand it. Most of the people who will read our decisions are not experts in regulation. Few members of the public, the press corps, the Legislature, and the California Supreme Court really understand our work. They are easily confused or put off by

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<sup>14</sup> Extracted from "Writing A Decision," Administrative Law Judges Division, 3/81, see Powerdocs Document Number 183047



our regulatory jargon. Accordingly, our decisions, particularly in the contested matters, must educate the public and sell the result we reach.

A well-written decision tells the reader the facts and the issues and shows him the process by which those issues are resolved. The finished product should allow the reader to fully comprehend with the least effort.

The fundamentals of good decision-writing include:

1. Organization of issues and subject matter in a logical sequence. The reader should not have to consider more than one subject at a time and should be comfortable with the arrangement of them;
2. Clarity of expression so that the reader knows exactly what thought the writer intends to impart;
3. Conciseness so that the reader's comprehension of the subject is not blunted by the necessity of wading through unessential material;
4. Continuity of thought so that the reader's concentration is not interrupted unnecessarily; and
5. A grammatical style which does not distract the reader and allows for an effortless comprehension of the thoughts being communicated. Common faults are repeated use of long, involved, and digressive sentences and the use of words which require the reader to consult a dictionary.

The better you state the issues and explain how you resolve them, the better the chances are that the Commission will adopt your proposed opinion. A well-written and well-reasoned opinion is difficult to refute.

What a Decision Must Contain

A decision must contain:

1. A title in the same form as prescribed for pleadings in the Rules of Practice and Procedure, together with a space in the upper left corner for "Decision \_\_\_\_\_".
2. A Table of Contents whenever a decision exceeds 50 pages, not including appendixes, or whenever such Table of Contents will assist in understanding the issues presented.
3. A list of Appearances. (May be placed in an appendix.)

## Appendix C

4. An Opinion portion containing:
  - a. A brief statement describing what the proceeding is about. (Jurisdictional.)
  - b. A brief summary of the procedural history of the matter (Hearings, notices, briefs, submission, etc.)
  - c. A concise general description of the positions of the participating parties on the disposition of the proceeding or the particular issue under discussion.
  - d. A description of motions not ruled upon during the proceeding, together with rulings on such motions.
  - e. A discussion of each contested issue and a determination of each such issue.
  - f. A separate statement of the findings of fact which are necessary for disposition of the proceeding and which support the conclusions of law underlying the ultimate order.
  - g. The conclusions of law dispositive of the proceeding and which cover all of the matters included in the order.
  - h. Such notices and admonishments that may be required by the nature of the proceeding. (See Stock Paragraphs Manual.)
5. An Order.
6. An effective date of the Order.
7. The appendixes referred to in the decision.
8. A glossary for orders of 50 or more pages spelling out shortcuts used in the order.

While all these components are necessary to a decision, the opinion portion is the greatest challenge to the ALJ. It must be well-organized and thorough and must justify the proposed order. The law requires that it set forth the material issues, the conclusions of law determining those issues, and the findings of fact on which those conclusions are based.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> PU Code § 1705.

## SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

### Unnecessary Recitation

Do not recite or quote the evidence at length unless it is absolutely necessary to a determination of some issue. The decision should mainly concern itself with the facts found from the evidence and not with exhaustive recitation of the evidence. However, a summary of the nature and thrust of testimony or exhibits is sometimes helpful to a description of the issues and their determination.

And a summary of the evidence may be crucial when you determine that certain evidence should be accorded little or no weight. Then, the evidence should be described in more detail to explain why it is not entitled to full credence. You may also wish to quote at length when the actual words in the transcript or exhibits are dispositive of a contested issue. Whenever you quote from the record or make specific reference to it, cite either the exhibit number or the transcript volume and page.

### Visual Aids

Sometimes reproducing an exhibit may be helpful. For example, grade-crossing diagrams, transmission line route maps, or service area maps can save many pages of explanation and description.

### Irrelevant Discussion

Some decisions contain a lengthy discussion of a disputed issue, the resolution of which will have no effect whatever upon the ultimate determination. This practice not only wastes resources, e.g. the time of the ALJ, the Chief ALJ, Assistant Chief ALJ, typists, staff, Commissioners and their staffs, but also diverts the reader from the important issues. You simply dispose of such disputed issues by setting forth why they are not material to the ultimate disposition of the proceeding.

### Excessive Citations

Citations are not necessary for well-established regulatory principles. If citations are made don't cite authority ad nauseam. One or two citations to most recent authority will suffice. The exception may be where a novel legal issue is involved.

### Poor Organization

A poorly organized opinion distracts the reader. Your opinion should dispose of the issues singly and in a logical order. Use marginal captions to divide the opinion into component parts. A well-organized opinion reflects an organized mind.

### Outlining

In complex matters with many issues, an outline will (1) help organize your opinion; (2) ensure that each issue is completely explained, discussed, and resolved in one place and in a logical order; and (3) save you time.

### DEFINITIONS

The concepts defined below represent the building blocks of our opinions. Each of these terms has a specific meaning in law and they are not interchangeable.

MATERIAL ISSUE: A question of fact or law which the Commission must decide in order to dispose of the proceeding.

FINDING OF FACT: A positive statement of the existence of nonexistence of a thing or event (past, present or future) or the state or characteristic of a thing or event. Well-drafted findings of fact usually head the reader inescapably to the writer's conclusion. If each material issue is resolved by one or more factual findings, you have a good chance of convincing the Commission your proposed order is correct and your order will probably be supportable before the Supreme Court. To be sure you prepare adequate findings: (1) write one or more factual findings after analyzing each issue and put them aside to include later in the findings, or (2) go through the opinion and write findings that address each contested issue. An excellent reference on adequate findings of fact is TURN v PUC, PT&T (1978) 22 C 3d 529. (See particularly the dissent.)

CONCLUSION OF LAW: A statement of the law or of principle applied to facts which dispose of an issue. To determine what the conclusion of law should contain, look to the language of the applicable code sections.

EVIDENCE: Sworn testimony, documentary exhibits of record, stipulations of facts, and such things or events of which the Commission has taken official notice, constitute the source (evidence) from which all findings of fact are made.

INFERENCE: A deduction of a fact that may logically and reasonable be drawn from another fact or group of facts which have been established. It is the type of deduction that requires no expertise and would be made by any normal person, particularly a juror who is a trier of fact.

PRESUMPTION: An assumption of fact that the law requires.<sup>16</sup>

ULTIMATE ISSUE: In any proceeding the relief requested in the pleadings is the ultimate issue. In a rate increase application the ultimate issue is

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<sup>16</sup> See §§ 600 et seq. of the Evidence Code. In Commission proceedings most of the presumptions are those affecting the burden of producing evidence, which are rebuttable presumptions and are somewhat procedural in nature. Our discussion will concern these.

what rates should be authorized or prescribed. In a certificate application the ultimate issue is what authority, if any, should be granted. In a complaint proceeding the ultimate issue is what relief should be granted. In a rule-making proceeding the ultimate issue is what rules, if any, should be prescribed. Ultimate issues concern those things that will be ordered by the Commission.

The ultimate issues are determined from conclusions of law which are usually set forth in the Public Utilities Code. When increases in rates have been shown to be justified, they should be granted; and when they have not been shown to be justified, they should be denied. Construction or operations which have been shown to be required by public convenience and necessity should be authorized; but construction or operations and necessity should not be authorized. Where a complainant has been damaged by being charged an unreasonable rate, and where reparation for such damage will not result in discrimination, the reparation should be awarded. Those conclusions of law which are determinative of the ultimate issues we will call *ultimate conclusions*.

From the above it may be seen that the ultimate conclusions require the Commission to make determination of the existence, nonexistence, or state of things, in other words, findings of fact. A determination of the ultimate issue requires findings of fact by the Commission on those matters. We call such findings *ultimate findings of fact*. All matters and questions that may influence the Commission in making such findings are *material issues*.

Generally the facts in the ultimate findings constitute broad concepts requiring the weighing of many things.<sup>17</sup> What constitutes “public convenience and necessity”? The concept may not be briefly defined, but it may be said generally that where the advantages to the public from the construction of utility plant or utility operations outweigh the disadvantages to the public, the construction or operation is required by public convenience and necessity. What constitutes a “reasonable rate” and when is an increase in rates “justified”? Again, the concepts cannot be defined other than in general terms. Just and reasonable rates are those which provide the utility opportunity for reasonable earnings and place the burden of achieving those earnings justly and equitable among the classes of ratepayers. Ordinarily, a rate increase is justified when it is shown to be necessary to the establishment of “just and reasonable” rates. Those conclusions of law (statement of principles) evolved from determination in many decisions, both state and federal, over a long period of time. For purposes here we will call them PRINCIPAL ISSUES. They call for the Commission to make findings of

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<sup>17</sup> This statement holds in connection with legislative proceedings before the Commission. In most judicial proceedings, such as a minimum rate enforcement proceeding, the ultimate findings are determined directly from findings on the basic issues, which will be described later.

fact on the matters recited therein; e.g. will the public benefit more than be disadvantaged, will the rates provide reasonable earnings to the utility, and will the rates distribute the burden justly and equitably? We will call the findings on the principal issues the **PRINCIPAL FINDINGS OF FACT**.

Determination of principal findings of fact usually requires the weighing of many criteria or circumstances. In some cases the Commission, particularly in rate matters and in some certificate matters, prescribes the criteria to be considered. In some cases the statutes prescribe the criteria. The courts in decisions on review have prescribed criteria the Commission must consider to regularly pursue its authority and to provide due process. The weight to be accorded any of the criteria to be considered is within the province of the Commission, and its determination is a conclusion of law. In some proceedings a participant may urge the Commission to consider certain other criteria in making its principal findings of fact or its ultimate findings of fact. The determination of whether to consider such criteria is a conclusion of law.

The criteria provide questions as to the existence, nonexistence, characteristics, or state of things or events; call the **BASIC ISSUES** because ordinarily the findings of fact (**BASIC FINDINGS**) may be made directly from the evidence, from inference from the evidence, or from evidence together with presumptions.

Basic issues are more easily recognized in enforcement proceedings. The ultimate issue is what should be provided in the order, i.e. the judgment. If the pleading requesting sanctions alleges the utility disobeyed an order of the Commission in violation of the Public Utilities Code, that allegation is one of the principal issues. The basic issues that must be determined which lead to a decision on that principal issue are: (1) is the utility subject to the regulations prescribed in the order, (2) what are the regulations prescribed, and (3) what did the utility do? The basic issues become immediately apparent because the pleading initiating the proceeding (complaint, OII, or Order to Show Cause with its accompanying affidavit) must allege the facts embodied in those basic issues.

A finding of fact that the alleged offense was committed disposes only of one principal issue. The ultimate issue is what action should be ordered. The actions that may be taken are circumscribed by the statute and to some extent they vary with the classification of utility or carrier and with the nature of the offense.

Findings of Facts and Results of Operations Issues

In rate increase proceedings, the parties frequently litigate elements of the results of operations. Yet opinions have sometimes contained only the finding “the adopted results of operations in Table \* is reasonable.” That by itself, is inadequate. The following hypothetical case will illustrate how to dispose of contested results of operations issues. The findings of fact on the results of operations issues should be something like this:

1. Applicant’s estimate of annual consumption per customer assumes that during the test period all customers will have converted to toilets using one gallon per flush; however, at most, only 50% of customers will convert because of an overall shortage of such toilets.
2. The staff’s estimate of \$10 per foot for installed 8-inch water mains does not reflect the latest price for 8-inch pipe, which is \$12 per foot.
3. The adopted results of operations in Table I is reasonable. (Ultimate finding.)

Findings of Fact and Rate Design

Rate design causes problems because it is probably hardest to relate an ultimate rate design to the underlying supporting facts. Therefore, you should begin by asking yourself what policy goal is the rate design trying to achieve; for example,

1. To encourage conservation?
2. To keep customers on the system?
3. To establish prices at competitive levels:
4. To fairly allocate and recover costs (fixed and/or variable costs)?
5. To minimize disparity?
6. To encourage consumption at particular times?
7. To establish rates as use-sensitive as possible?

Once you have set your goal, then list the facts from the evidence which lead to the ultimate conclusionary finding that the adopted rates are just an reasonable.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> You will make a better record if you ensure that rate design witnesses fully explain their goals and assumptions. Often exhibits by both staff and utilities omit the underlying philosophy, rationale, or goals of a proposed rate design. However, a good opinion should at least briefly cover these points.

## Routing Slip

### Letter for Executive Director's Signature

Letter Sent to: \_\_\_\_\_

Letter originated from (Division/Branch): \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Supervisor</b>			
<b>Branch Chief</b>			
<b>Division Director</b>			